

## Under the Bed

Catherine Framke

Curled up into a ball, with my beloved Big Bunny clutched against me in desperate need for comfort. It had been another fight, another talk in which he walked away. He had left me feeling abandoned and alone, as if no one cared. These were not foreign thoughts nor feelings to me.

Three years I did his laundry, cooked, cleaned, got groceries and paid bills. I quit my job to raise our child. Found a place to live to occupy us and his bum brother. When he needed something I went to the store. Bending backward, I did everything he needed, while he worked and played games with his twin brother.

At this moment of sorrow, I remembered the nine-year-old girl I had once been. It was a strange moment to remember her. We both had the sorrow I felt now, but we had different reasons and different ways to cope.

The little girl I had been would climb the stairs to her room, after making sure her brother was ready for bed and heading to his room. My parents were in their room, like they often were, doing things I did not understand at nine years old and wish I never learned. My older sister and brother were in the basement, my brother's room, doing other things I did not know of yet.

It had been the first time I had a room of my own. Surprisingly, my room was normally clean, though I stayed in my room when I was at home. It was easier being in my room alone than watching my parents fight with my older siblings.

The only evidence of life in the room was the two rats in the aquarium on a table next to my bed. At the time, I thought I was old enough to have pets. Sometimes I forgot to feed them. Still, they were the only friends I had at the time, and I did love them dearly.

The bed was wooden, and was a part of a set of bunk beds. It was done when we moved and my sister and I didn't have to share a room for the first time in my life. The only problem was that a board broke in the middle of the bed and left a dip.



Every night I walked to my bed and wished my rats a good night. Instead of lying down in bed, I grabbed my pillow, Big Bunny, and Jasmine comforter and set them up under the bed. Rolling under the bed, I used Big Bunny as a pillow, curled up into a ball, and fell asleep.

In the morning I would put them back on top of the bed. Then head to my brother's room to wake him up. I would make him breakfast and together, we would walk to school. After school, I met him at his classroom, made him use the restroom, and we walked home. The two of us would not see our older siblings or our parents until after school. Even then the four of them would not notice us.

I slept under the bed for a long time. At the time, I did not realize why it was. The broken piece of wood poked me and there was no room to move. Yet, it was comfortable in the dark cramped space. It separated me from the rest of the world, kept me safe.

Under the bed, my classmates couldn't torture me and I did not have to protect my brother from his own torturers. Under the bed my parents didn't ignore me to take care of my rebellious older siblings. Under the bed I was completely and utterly alone, because I wanted it that way.

Fourteen years later, I can't fit under the bed, but I want more than anything to feel the comfort I felt at nine. I still want to hide from my problems. There is nowhere to hide. I am no longer the child; I am the parent making a choice for myself.

Clinging to Big Bunny, like the child I wish I still was I decide that it is time that I start to taking care of myself and not everyone else. It is time to think of my own happiness.